IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Please amend claims 1, 10, 18-22, 28-30 and 36-37 as follows:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) An image content providing method of providing an image content via a network from an image content providing apparatus to an image content reproducing apparatus, said image content providing method comprising the steps of:

requesting, via the stream distribution, distribution of said image content, said request sent from said image content reproducing apparatus to said image content providing apparatus;

transmitting, via the network by one of stream distribution, download distribution and package distribution, said image content to said image content reproducing apparatus,

wherein when said image content is transmitted via download distribution ~~and package distribution~~ further including the steps of:

transmitting an advertising inserting condition to said image content reproducing apparatus;

detecting a position of inserting an advertisement image in said image content at said image content reproducing apparatus;

requesting an advertisement image providing apparatus, having said advertisement image, to distribute said advertisement image to said image content reproducing apparatus and sending said advertising inserting condition to said advertisement image providing apparatus by said image content reproducing apparatus;

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selecting said advertisement image to be inserted into said image content

based on at least said advertisement inserting condition and a maximum number of distribution

times and transmitting said advertisement image selected, by stream distribution via the network,

to said image content reproducing apparatus at said advertisement image providing apparatus;

inserting said advertisement image transmitted to said image content

reproducing apparatus at the position of inserting said advertisement image in said image content

at said image reproducing apparatus; and

display thereof, and

wherein when said image content is transmitted via package distribution

further including the steps of:

transmitting an advertising inserting condition to said image content

reproducing apparatus;

detecting a position of inserting an advertisement image in said image

content at said image content reproducing apparatus;

requesting an advertisement image providing apparatus, having said

advertisement image, to distribute said advertisement image to said image content reproducing

apparatus and sending said advertising inserting condition to said advertisement image providing

apparatus by said image content reproducing apparatus;

selecting said advertisement image to be inserted into said image content

based on at least said advertisement inserting condition and a maximum number of distribution

times and transmitting said advertisement image selected, by stream distribution via the network,

to said image content reproducing apparatus at said advertisement image providing apparatus;

<u>inserting said advertisement image transmitted to said image content</u>

<u>reproducing apparatus at the position of inserting said advertisement image in said image content</u>

<u>at said image reproducing apparatus; and</u>

<u>display thereof, and</u>

wherein when said image content is transmitted via stream distribution, during transmission detecting the position of inserting the advertisement image in said image content at said image content providing apparatus;

requesting the advertisement image providing apparatus, having said advertisement image, to distribute said advertisement image to said image content providing apparatus and sending the advertisement inserting condition to the advertisement image providing apparatus;

selecting said advertisement image to be inserted into said image content based on at least the advertisement inserting condition and a maximum number of distribution times and transmitting said advertisement image selected, by stream distribution via the network, to said image content providing apparatus at said advertisement image providing apparatus;

inserting said advertisement image transmitted to said image content providing apparatus at the position of inserting said advertisement image in said image content at said image content providing apparatus;

distributing, via stream distribution, the advertisement image from said image content providing apparatus to said image content reproducing apparatus; and

restarting stream distribution of said image content from said image content providing apparatus to said image content reproducing apparatus when the distribution of the advertisement image finishes.

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PATENT
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2. (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 1, wherein when said image content is requested to distribute at said image content reproducing apparatus, said image content is selected and requested to distribute based on a title list which is information for viewing said distributable image contents to be transmitted from said image content providing apparatus.

3. (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 1, wherein the position of said image content for inserting said advertisement image is detected based on advertisement inserting condition data having an advertisement image inserting position condition for designating the position of inserting said advertisement image and an advertisement image selecting condition for designating a category of said advertisement image capable of being inserted to said image content.

4. (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 3, wherein said advertisement inserting condition data includes an advertisement image reproducing condition for designating a maximum period of time for reproducing said advertisement image when said advertisement image is inserted to said image content.

5. (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 3, wherein when said advertisement image is requested to distribute at said image content providing apparatus, said advertisement inserting condition data is transmitted to said advertisement image providing apparatus and when said advertisement image is selected at said advertisement image

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providing apparatus, said advertisement image is selected based on said advertisement inserting condition data.

6.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 1, wherein when said image content is requested to distribute at said image content reproducing apparatus, viewer information of a viewer for utilizing said image content is transmitted to said image content providing apparatus.

7.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 6, wherein when said advertisement image is requested to distribute at said image content providing apparatus, said viewer information is transmitted to said advertisement image providing apparatus and when said advertisement image is selected at said advertisement image providing apparatus, said advertisement image is selected based on said viewer information.

8.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 1, wherein said image content providing apparatus comprises:

a main image content distributing apparatus; and

a plurality of deputy image content distributing apparatus;

wherein said main image content distributing apparatus selects one of the deputy image content distributing apparatus from said plurality of deputy image content distributing apparatus by a request of distributing said image content from said image content reproducing apparatus and said selected deputy image content distributing apparatus distributes said image content to said image content reproducing apparatus.

9.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 1,

wherein said image content providing apparatus comprises:

a main image content distributing apparatus; and

a plurality of image content distribution splitter nodes;

wherein when said main image content distributing apparatus is requested to

distribute said image content, said main image content distributing apparatus selects said image

content distribution splitter node and distributes said image content to said image content

distribution splitter node and said image content is distributed from said image content

distribution splitter node to said image content reproducing apparatus.

10.   (Currently Amended) An image content providing method of providing an

image content from an image content providing apparatus to an image content reproducing

apparatus, said image content providing method comprising the steps of:

requesting, via a network, to provide said image content from said image content

reproducing apparatus to said image content providing apparatus;

providing said requested image content in its entirety and providing advertisement

inserting condition from said image content providing apparatus to said image content

reproducing apparatus by one of download distribution and package distribution;

for [[both]] download distribution ~~and package distribution~~, the method further

comprising the steps of:

detecting at said image content reproducing apparatus a position of inserting an advertisement image in said <u>downloaded</u> image content ~~previously provided~~ when said <u>downloaded</u> image content is reproduced at said image content reproducing apparatus;

sending a request from said image content reproducing apparatus, via the network by stream distribution, to distribute said advertisement image to an advertisement image providing apparatus having said advertisement image to be inserted and sending the advertisement inserting condition to said advertisement image providing apparatus;

selecting said advertisement image to be inserted to said image content based on at least said advertisement inserting condition and a maximum number of distribution times and distributing of said advertisement image selected via the network by stream distribution to said image content reproducing apparatus at said advertisement image providing apparatus; and

reproducing said advertisement image when the position of inserting said distributed advertisement image is reached in reproducing said image content at said image content reproducing apparatus

<u>for package distribution, the method further comprising the steps of:</u>

<u>detecting at said image content reproducing apparatus a position of inserting an advertisement image in said image content provided on a recording medium when said image content is reproduced at said image content reproducing apparatus;</u>

<u>sending a request from said image content reproducing apparatus, via the network by stream distribution, to distribute said advertisement image to an advertisement image providing apparatus having said advertisement image to be inserted and sending the advertisement inserting condition to said advertisement image providing apparatus;</u>

selecting said advertisement image to be inserted to said image content based on

at least said advertisement inserting condition and a maximum number of distribution times and

distributing of said advertisement image selected via the network by stream distribution to said

image content reproducing apparatus at said advertisement image providing apparatus; and

reproducing said advertisement image when the position of inserting said

distributed advertisement image is reached in reproducing said image content at said image

content reproducing apparatus.

11.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 10,

wherein when said image content is requested to distribute at the image content reproducing

apparatus, said image content is selected and requested to distribute based on a title list which is

information for viewing said distributable image contents to be transmitted from said image

content providing apparatus.

12.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 10,

wherein the position of said image content for inserting said advertisement image is detected at

said image content reproducing apparatus based on advertisement inserting condition data having

an advertisement image inserting position condition transmitted from said image content

providing apparatus for designating the position of inserting said advertisement image to said

image content and an advertisement image selecting condition for designating a category of said

advertisement image capable of being inserted to said image content.

13.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 11, wherein said advertisement inserting condition data includes an advertisement image reproducing condition for designating a maximum period of time for reproducing said advertisement image when said advertisement image is inserted to said image content.

14.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 11, wherein when said advertisement image is requested to distribute at said image content providing apparatus, said advertisement inserting condition data is transmitted to said advertisement image providing apparatus and when said advertisement image is selected at said advertisement image providing apparatus, said advertisement image is selected based on said advertisement inserting condition data.

15.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 11, wherein when said advertisement image is requested to distribute at said image content providing apparatus, viewer information of a viewer utilizing said image content is transmitted to said advertisement image providing apparatus and when said advertisement image is selected at said advertisement image providing apparatus, said advertisement image is selected based on said viewer information.

16.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 11, wherein said image content is provided by said image content providing apparatus by subjecting said image content to download distribution to said image content reproducing apparatus.

17.   (Original) The image content providing method according to claim 11,

wherein said image content is provided by said image content providing means by transmitting

an information recording medium recorded with said image content to said image content

reproducing apparatus.

18.   (Currently Amended) An image content providing system communicating

via a network comprising:

an image content providing apparatus having an image content and having a

function of providing said image content and an advertisement image via [[a]] the network by

stream distribution;

an advertisement image providing apparatus having [[an]] the advertisement

image to be inserted to a position in said image content and having a function of providing said

advertisement image, via the network by stream distribution to said image content providing

apparatus, based on at least advertisement inserting condition and a maximum number of

distribution times;

an image content reproducing apparatus having a function of reproducing said

image content and said advertisement image received from said image content providing

apparatus;

wherein said image content providing apparatus has a function of inserting the

advertisement image, transmitted via the network by stream distribution from said advertisement

image providing apparatus, at the position in said image content and restarting distribution via

the network by stream distribution of said image content when said advertisement image is

finished being transmitted; wherein the image content processing system providing the image

content and advertisement image to the image content reproducing apparatus by the network via stream distribution when the image content is subjected to stream distribution, via deputy stream distribution when the image content is subjected to deputy stream distribution and via multicast stream distribution when the image content is subjected to multicast stream distribution.

19.   (Currently Amended) An image content providing system comprising:

an image content providing apparatus having an image content and having a function of providing said image content via one of package distribution and download distribution;

an advertisement image providing apparatus having an advertisement image to be inserted to said image content and having a function of providing said advertisement image, via a network by stream distribution, based on at least advertisement inserting condition and a maximum number of distribution times;

an image content reproducing apparatus having a function of receiving the image content in is entirety prior to reproduction, receiving the advertisement inserting condition from said image content providing apparatus, and reproducing said image content and said advertisement image, wherein the function of receiving the image content includes (a) via package distribution when the image content is subjected to package distribution and (b) via download distribution when the image content is subjected to download distribution;

wherein said image content reproducing apparatus has a function of (a) acquiring said advertisement image from said advertisement image providing apparatus via the network by stream distribution during reproduction of the image content after transmitting said

advertisement inserting condition to the advertisement image providing apparatus and (b)

inserting said advertisement image into said image content and reproducing thereof.

    20.   (Currently Amended) An image content providing apparatus for

providing an image content via a network, said image content providing apparatus comprising:

        an image content database for storing said image content;

        list forming means having a function of forming a title list which is information of

viewing said image content stored to said image content database and providing said title list;

        image providing means having a function of (a) receiving an advertisement image

via the network by stream distribution based on at least a maximum number of distribution times

and advertisement inserting condition, (b) inserting the advertisement image at a position in said

image content of said image database and distributing thereof via the network by stream

distribution and (c) restarting stream distribution of the image content when the stream

distribution of the advertisement image is finished, wherein the image providing means

providing the image content via stream distribution when the image content is subjected to

stream distribution, via deputy stream distribution, when the image content is subjected to deputy

stream distribution and via a multicast stream distribution when the image content is subjected to

multicast stream distribution.

    21.   (Currently Amended) An advertisement image providing apparatus

having an advertisement image and providing said advertisement image, said advertisement

image providing apparatus comprising:

        an advertisement image database for storing said advertisement image;

advertisement image selecting means <u>communicating with an image content</u>

<u>providing apparatus and an image reproducing apparatus, said advertisement image selecting</u>

<u>means</u> for receiving, via the internet by stream distribution, selection information from <u>one of</u>

[[an]] <u>the</u> image content providing apparatus and [[an]] <u>the</u> image reproducing apparatus and for

selecting said advertisement image to be provided from said advertisement image database based

upon said selection information and at least a maximum number of distribution times;

advertisement image providing means having a function of providing, via the

internet by stream distribution, said advertisement image selected by said advertisement image

selecting means <u>to the image content providing apparatus or the image reproducing apparatus</u>

<u>that provided the selection information</u> and generating an advertisement providing log which is

history information when said advertisement image is selected;

an advertisement providing log database for storing said advertisement providing

log; and

advertisement database registering means for attaching an advertisement identifier

to said advertisement image and storing said advertisement image to said advertisement image

database.

22.   (Currently Amended) An image content reproducing apparatus for

reproducing an image content, said content reproducing apparatus comprising:

image acquiring means for acquiring said image content in its entirety and an

advertisement inserting condition data and for separately acquiring, via a network by stream

distribution, an advertisement image to be inserted into said image content, wherein acquisition

of said image content via the network includes <u>(a)</u> download distribution <u>when said image</u>

content is subjected to download distribution and (b) package distribution when said image

content is subjected to package distribution;

image reproducing means having a function of reproducing said image content

previously acquired by said image acquiring means and during reproduction of said image

content separately acquiring said advertisement image via the network by stream distribution and

inserting said advertisement image into said image content based on the advertisement inserting

condition data and reproducing thereof; and

image content selecting means for requesting distribution of a title list to an image

content providing apparatus according to an inputted instruction and acquiring said title list via

the network by stream distribution,

wherein the advertisement image is acquired based on viewer information and at

least the advertisement inserting condition and a maximum number of distribution times.

23-27.   (Canceled)

28.   (Currently Amended) A non-transitory program storage medium stored

with an image content providing program for providing an image content, said program storage

medium comprising:

list forming means having a function of forming a title list constituting

information of viewing said image content stored to said image content database and providing

said title list via a network by stream distribution; and

image providing means having a function of (a) receiving an advertisement

image, via the network by stream distribution, based on at least an advertisement inserting

condition and a maximum number of distribution times, (b) inserting the advertisement image at

a position in said image content of said image content database and distributing of the

advertisement image via the network by stream distribution and (c) restarting stream distribution

of the image content when the stream distribution of the advertisement image is finished,

wherein the image providing means providing the image content via stream distribution when the

image content is subjected to stream distribution, via deputy stream distribution when the image

content is subjected to deputy stream distribution and via a multicast stream distribution when

the image content is subjected to multicast stream distribution.

     29.   (Currently Amended) A non-transitory program storage medium stored

with an advertisement image providing program for providing an advertisement image, said

program storage medium comprising:

     advertisement image selecting means communication with an image content

providing apparatus and an image reproducing apparatus, said advertisement image selecting

means for receiving, via the internet by stream distribution, selection information from one of the

[[an]] image content providing apparatus and [[an]] the image reproducing apparatus and

selecting said advertisement image to be provided from an advertisement image database based

on the selection information and at least a maximum number of distribution times;

     advertisement image providing means having a function of providing, via the

internet by stream distribution, said advertisement image selected by said advertisement image

selecting means to the image content providing apparatus [[and]] or the image reproduction

apparatus that sent the selection information and generating an advertisement providing log

constituting history information in providing said advertisement image; and

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advertisement database registering means for attaching an advertisement identifier to said advertisement image and storing said advertisement image to said advertisement image database.

30.   (Currently Amended) A non-transitory program storage medium stored with an image content reproducing program for reproducing an image content, said program storage medium comprising:

image acquiring means for (a) acquiring said image content in its entirety and advertising inserting condition data via a network, wherein the acquisition including (1) download distribution when said image content is subjected to download distribution and (2) package distribution when said image content is subjected to package distribution and (b) separately acquiring an advertisement image to be inserted into said image content via the network by stream distribution;

image reproducing means having a function of reproducing the image content previously acquired by said image acquiring means and detecting an advertisement insert position, acquiring said advertisement image via the network by stream distribution and inserting said advertisement image into said image content based on the advertisement inserting condition data and reproducing thereof; and

image content selecting means for requesting via the network by stream distribution, distribution of a title list to an image content providing apparatus according to an inputted instruction and acquiring said title list,

wherein the advertisement image is acquired based on viewer information and

based on at least the advertisement inserting condition data and a maximum number of

distribution times.

31.   (Canceled)

32.   (Previously Presented) The image content providing method of claim 1,

wherein said image content is a moving picture.

33.   (Previously Presented) The image content providing method of claim 1,

wherein said image content is one of a movie, a drama and an animation.

34.   (Previously Presented) The content providing system of claim 18, wherein

said image content is a moving picture.

35.   (Previously Presented) The image content providing system of claim 18,

wherein said image content is one of a movie, a drama and an animation.

36.   (Currently Amended) An image providing method of providing an image

from an image program providing apparatus to an image program reproducing apparatus, said

image providing method comprising the steps of:

requesting via a network ~~by stream distribution~~, distribution of said image, said

request sent from said image program reproducing apparatus to said image program providing

apparatus;

transmitting via the network ~~by stream distribution~~ said image to said image

program reproducing apparatus and during transmission detecting a position of inserting an

advertisement image in said image at said image program providing apparatus;

requesting an advertisement image providing apparatus, having said

advertisement image, to distribute said advertisement image to said image program providing

apparatus <u>when the position of inserting the advertisement image is detected</u> and providing

advertisement inserting condition to said advertisement image providing apparatus;

selecting said advertisement image to be inserted into said image based on at least

the advertisement inserting condition received and a maximum number of distribution times and

transmitting thereof via the network by stream distribution to said image program providing

apparatus at said advertisement image providing apparatus;

inserting said advertisement image transmitted to said image program providing

apparatus at the position of inserting said advertisement image <u>detected</u> in said image;

distributing, via the network ~~by stream distribution~~, the advertising image; and

restarting ~~stream~~ distribution of said image content when the stream distribution

of the advertisement image is finished, wherein ~~at least one of~~ (a) <u>when said image is provided</u>

<u>by stream distribution,</u> the image program providing apparatus provides the image and

advertisement image directly to said image program reproducing apparatus, (b) <u>when said image</u>

<u>is provided by deputy stream distribution,</u> the image program providing apparatus instructs a

plurality of deputy image program providing apparatuses to distribute the image and the

advertisement image to said image program reproducing apparatus and (c) <u>when said image is provided by multicast stream distribution,</u> the image program providing apparatus distributes the image to a plurality of distribution splitter nodes and the splitter nodes acquire the advertisement image and distribute the image and advertisement image to said image program reproducing apparatus.

37.   (Currently Amended) An image content providing method of providing an image content from an image content providing apparatus to an image content reproducing apparatus, said image content providing method comprising the steps of:

requesting, via a network by stream distribution, to provide said image content from said image content reproducing apparatus to said image content providing apparatus;

providing said requested image content in its entirety and providing advertisement inserting condition from said image content providing apparatus to said image content reproducing apparatus;

detecting a position of inserting an advertisement image in said image content previously provided when said image content is reproduced at said image content reproducing apparatus;

requesting, via the network by stream distribution, to distribute said advertisement image to an advertisement image providing apparatus having said advertisement image to be inserted and sending the advertisement inserting condition;

selecting said advertisement image to be inserted to said image content based on at least the advertisement inserting condition received and a maximum number of distribution

times and distributing thereof via the network by stream distribution to said image content

reproducing apparatus at said advertisement image providing apparatus;

reproducing said advertisement image when the position of inserting said

distributed advertisement image is reached in reproducing said image content at said image

content reproducing apparatus, wherein

providing the requested image content in it entirety to said image content

reproducing apparatus includes (a) downloading via the network by stream distribution, the

image content in its entirety to the image content reproducing apparatus when the image content

is subjected to download distribution and (b) distributing the image content in its entirety to the

image content reproducing apparatus via an information recording medium when the image

content is subjected to package distribution.

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